



CHAPTER 11

THE MIDNIGHT RIDE

Outside Cambridge, Massachusetts, April 18, 1775, 11:30 p.m.

The cool night air whooshed across Paul Revere's face, making his eyes water from the speed of this magnificent horse. The bright moon above illuminated the road ahead as the patriot's cloak furiously flapped in the wind behind him. He gripped the reins, leaned over the saddle, and pressed his spurs into the horse's side. The thundering sound of the horse's hooves was matched only by the rush of adrenaline coursing through his veins.

As Revere passed Charlestown Neck he saw up ahead two mounted British officers on patrol. They spotted him immediately. "HALT!" they shouted, and started to give chase.

"I'd rather not, boys," Revere muttered to himself. Thinking quickly, he changed course, forcing the British officers to follow him off the main route. He leaned into the horse and shouted, "H'YA! Let's lose those lobsterbacks!"

As he came to a dark area off the grassy path, Revere rode his horse up a slight embankment and glanced back at the horsemen closing in on him. The British patrol galloped into the dark area only to find it was a thick clay pit of muck. Their horses quickly got stuck and halted in their tracks, neighing wildly and bucking against their riders. Revere grinned as he heard the officers shouting and cursing behind him while he left them in the muck and continued on into the moonlit countryside.



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Revere soon entered Medford and stopped to warn a Minuteman officer. “The regulars are out!” he urgently told him. He then rode on to Menotomy, pausing at every house and shouting the same warning to the people inside that the regulars would soon be marching this way. Immediately people began to sound the alarm and muster the militia. Other riders quickly dispersed to start spreading the word north.

After midnight, around 12:30 p.m., Paul Revere entered the town of Lexington and rode straight to the Clarke house. As he dismounted his horse and headed to the front door, he saw the eight militia guards outside, relieved to see protectors stationed there.

Sgt. Munroe rushed to meet Revere on the walkway to the house, holding out his hand to bar him entry. “I’m sorry, Sir, but I can’t let you inside. Your arrival will create too much noise.”

Paul Revere’s eyes widened in disbelief at such an absurd statement. “NOISE?! YOU’LL HAVE NOISE ENOUGH BEFORE LONG! THE REGULARS ARE COMING OUT!”

Inside the house, John Hancock heard Revere shouting. “Come in, Revere! We’re not afraid of you.”

Revere grumbled at Munroe and pushed his way past the protective sergeant. He opened the door and took off his hat, wiping his sweaty face with his sleeve after his rigorous ride. “The regulars are loading into boats and crossing to Charlestown. Looks to be seven hundred to eight hundred men plus small artillery. Warren sends word for you men to leave Lexington immediately.”

Hancock and Adams shot glances at one another. Behind them the household was buzzing with activity. Reverend Clarke was busy hiding money and other objects of value, stuffing them in the



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potatoes or wherever he could. Aunt Lydia was wringing her hands and crying as she helped Mrs. Clarke to dress the children in case they had to flee. Dorothy placed her hands on little Elizabeth Clarke's shoulders as they peeked around the corner to watch John Hancock inspecting his sword. His polished gun sat next to him.

"I'm not going to leave those brave men protecting us outside while I run away to safety!"

Hancock protested, vigorously polishing his sword. He was ready for a fight.

Samuel Adams looked up at Revere, who put a hand on his hip and slapped his hat on the table.

"There's a *reason* they're protecting you, John! You are the President of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress! Listen to reason!"

"I think he's right, John," Samuel echoed, much to Hancock's surprise. "Think about it. If the regulars arrest us, the people will lose you as the leader of their collective voice, and I will no longer be able to help keep up the resistance with the Sons of Liberty."

"Not to mention the fact that you two are supposed to be on your way to Philadelphia to represent Massachusetts at the Continental Congress," Dawes added, having arrived and alerted houses around Lexington. It was now 12:30 a.m.

Revere turned and happily gripped Dawes by the arm. "Thank God, you made it! How did you get past the sentry at Boston Neck?"

"It just so happened that a friend of mine was on duty, and let me through," Dawes replied with a broad grin. "I was shaking in my boots until I saw who it was holding out his hand to stop me. If my friend hadn't been there, I doubt I could have made it out of Boston."



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Liz and Nigel shared a grin. “I wonder who could have arranged *that?*” Nigel whispered.

Revere looked back to the stubborn Hancock. “Warren sent both of us here from Boston to warn you, at great risk to ourselves and to those who helped us escape Boston. I myself almost got caught by the British patrol outside of Cambridge. Thankfully, Larkin let me borrow his new horse. She’s the fastest beast I’ve ever ridden.”

“And *I* wonder just who this ‘new horse’ is,” Liz whispered, slipping out the front door. Nigel trailed along behind.

“I’m forever in your debt, gentlemen, thank you.” Hancock frowned, realizing the gravity of what these men had done. “But you’ve also sounded the alarm across the countryside along the way, correct?”

“Of course, and we need to ride on to Concord to sound the alarm there, as that’s where the regulars ultimately are bound,” Dawes answered quickly.

“And we should send out as many riders as we can to alert the countryside,” Revere added.

“We’ll see to that immediately,” Samuel Adams responded, getting to his feet to shake hands with Revere and Dawes. “Thank you both, and Godspeed. I’ll keep working on Hancock to get us on the road as well.”

Outside, Liz and Nigel ran over to the magnificent brown horse that had carried Revere to Lexington. “Well done in delivering Revere past the dreaded foe and here to warn the patriot leaders!” Nigel cheered. “Might I inquire as to your name?”



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“Good evening, Nigel and Liz,” answered the horse with a wink, lowering her head to get eye to eye with them. “How goes the deciphering?”

“We had a feeling! *Bonsoir*, Gillamon. We are making progress,” Liz answered. “But for the urgent matter at hand, what should we do tonight?”

“Get to the belfry at Lexington Green and observe everything that happens when the regulars arrive,” Gillamon answered quickly as Revere and Dawes hurriedly came back outside to mount the horses. “If the enemy is going to make a move, it likely will happen in the next few hours.”

“Fly like the wind!” Nigel cheered from the shadows.

Together he and Liz raced to Lexington Green while Revere and Dawes rode off toward Concord. As the friends reached the tall wooden belfry overlooking the small triangular common, they hurriedly made their way to the top to get a clear view of everything below. They could see militiamen gathering in greater numbers at Buckman’s Tavern and lanterns crossing the green as people scurried about. Moonlight spilled into the wooden tower, casting a silvery sheen on the 400-pound bell hanging there.

“Want to help me sound the alarm?” came a voice in the shadows, causing Liz and Nigel to jump. They turned to see a young militiaman holding the rope and grinning. “Gillamon said you’d be here soon.”

Liz exhaled in relief and walked over to put her claws into the rope. “It would be an honor, *mon amie*.”



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“Brilliant!” Nigel cheered, running over to jump onto the rope.

Together, Clarie, Liz, and Nigel pulled the rope, and the huge bell’s clacker reverberated with a loud “bong” that drifted out over the surrounding countryside.

“The alarm!” Doctor Samuel Prescott exclaimed from a house nearby. He was a young physician from Concord who had spent the evening in Lexington visiting his fiancée, Miss Mulliken. “I must go help spread the word to Concord!” He kissed the young lady, grabbed his hat, and headed out the door.

Not only did the bell arouse Doctor Prescott and the people in Lexington, but the British patrol on the road as well. The mounted officers quickly turned and started heading back toward Lexington. It wouldn’t be long before they ran right into the patriots racing to Concord.



Outskirts of Lexington, Massachusetts, April 19, 1:30 a.m.

Revere and Dawes steadily galloped along in unison when from behind them they heard a third horse approaching. Overtaking the duo, Prescott came alongside them, shouting, “It’s Samuel Prescott of Concord!” He was known to them as a Son of Liberty. “I heard the alarm!”

Revere and Dawes slowed their horses. “The regulars are marching from Boston to capture the military stores in Concord. We’re heading there now,” Revere explained.

“I’ll help spread the word,” Prescott answered determinedly.



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Together the trio picked up the brisk pace once again and galloped on. As they reached the Lexington-Lincoln line, about halfway to Concord, Dawes and Prescott stopped to alarm the house of a couple also courting late in the night. Nathaniel Baker was a Minuteman from Lincoln and immediately bid Miss Elizabeth Taylor farewell to ride off and warn his neighbors and the other Minutemen there.

Revere, one hundred yards ahead of them, saw the British patrol officers heading their way. It was the same group who had arrested the three scouts from Lexington earlier in the night. He cupped a hand around his mouth and shouted back at his friends, “Dawes! Prescott! We’ve got company!”

“HALT!” shouted one of the British officers as Dawes and Prescott made their way to Revere.

Dawes suddenly changed course and galloped off toward Lexington. Two of the patrolmen immediately gave chase. Thinking quickly, Dawes rode into the yard of a house and acted as if he was expected there. “Halloo, my boys!” he shouted, “I’ve got two of them!” Immediately the pursuing officers stopped and fled, fearing they had been led into an ambush. Dawes turned to ride on to Lexington but his horse rose up, snorting violently, and bucked him off. He didn’t notice that his watch fell out of his pocket as he hit the ground. His horse ran off into the night and Dawes sat there for a moment with his arms resting on his knees, catching his breath.

Meanwhile, as Prescott rode to Revere’s assistance the two patriots were overtaken by four patrolmen who rode up to them, pistols in hand. “If you go an inch farther, you’re a dead man,” an officer threatened Revere.



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Revere and Prescott exchanged nervous glances as the patrol forced the two of them into a pasture with a barn. Prescott leaned over and hoarsely whispered, “Put on!” Immediately he took off to the left while Revere took off to the right. Before the British could stop Prescott, he jumped over a low wall, knowing it was there, and escaped. He looked behind him to make sure he wasn’t being followed. Prescott dug his spurs into his horse, leaned over and urged, “Get me to Concord! It’s up to us now. H’YA!”

As Revere headed to some woods at the bottom of the pasture, six officers came out of the trees and overpowered him. They grabbed Gillamon by the reins, and forced Revere to dismount. One of the officers put a pistol to the patriot’s head and hissed through gritted teeth, “We’re going to question you, rebel, and if you don’t give us true answers I’ll blow your brains out.”

Gillamon snorted angrily and Revere held up his hands as they pushed him along to the barn.

“What is your name?” one of the officers asked.

“Revere,” the patriot answered. “Paul Revere.”

“Ah, so we have captured the infamous silversmith who dared to depict His Majesty’s troops cutting down innocent citizens in the streets?” Major Mitchell spat, recounting the etching of the Boston Massacre that Revere had printed. It was widely distributed propaganda to fire up patriot citizens, but inaccurate in some of the details. “Well, silversmith, we’ll get the truth out of you tonight.”

A British sergeant took Gillamon away and the horse neighed and jerked its head in defiance.

Gillamon could hear Revere grunting from the rough treatment at the hands of the soldiers. An



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officer lit some lanterns and they forced Revere to take a seat on top of a wooden barrel.

Major Mitchell grabbed one of the lanterns and got right in Revere's face. The lantern light cast shadows over their perspiring faces. "Now then, Revere, tell us *exactly* what you and your fellow riders are doing out tonight."

Revere gingerly wiped his bloodied mouth and squinted angrily at the officer. "Exactly?" he asked with a sarcastic smile. "Very well. I left Boston just before midnight. Two of your patrol tried to catch me but their horses got stuck in a bog. Along with my friends, I've alerted citizens throughout the countryside that General Gage's men are marching to destroy the military stores at Concord. So by the time the regulars reach Concord, they will find *nothing* but armed militia ready to resist them. Everything will have been safely moved, and Gage's men will miss their target."

The major contorted his mouth and stood upright, handing the lantern to another soldier. Revere wore a defiant, smug expression. The major tugged the bottom of his jacket to straighten it, and gripped his leather gloves tightly to slap Revere across the face. "Insolent rebel! We'll take you back to Boston under heavy guard," he sneered, pulling on his gloves. "Then we'll see what General Gage might have to say about your midnight ride."